

Man behind raptor cams sets sights on owls

Five questions for Wing Goodale, an outdoorsman you should know
By DIERDRE FLEMING



Wing Goodale, deputy director of the Bio Diversity Research Institute in Gorham, works with a raptor. He got the institute's first eagle cam going, and that has been followed by video monitoring of peregrines and ospreys.

Courtesy photo

Wing Goodale could be called the one who started the cam craze in Maine, at least in regard to raptors.

Now a senior scientist and deputy director at the BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham, Goodale got the institute's first bald eagle cam up and running in 2005. The institute had a loon cam, since 2003. Today it has two bald eagle cams up, and plans for more. Anyone know where there are nesting bard owls?

Q: You got the eagle cam going, and it's taken off with lots of activity, isn't that right?

A: Both pairs are staying around the nest, it's really good to see. Although they are several months away from nesting, right now the birds are trying to bring sticks to the nest. It's a very good indicator that they're going to consider nesting. In Eagle Cam Two the pair successfully raised two young and clearly are already thinking about next year. They are bringing sticks on the nest on quite a regular basis. The peregrine falcons are very territorial protecting their nest site. When we were out there working on the camera for a couple of moments they were very

protective. It was great to see because many peregrine falcons are actually migrating through, down to Mexico and further south. These birds are sticking around Maine. Clearly that means we may see them nesting again in early April like we did this first year.

Q: How many bird cams do you have up now?

A: Six today. We hope to get more up. We have enough equipment to put up another significant eagle cam. Or, I've always been excited to put up an owl cam on a great horned or bard owl. We're looking for sites. So any readers who have an owl nest in their backyard, give us a call! We haven't done it, but we'd love to. The birds are around. What's cool about owls is they start nesting in the winter. You can see their activity sometime after Christmas.

Q: And other than setting up the camera, it is non-intrusive, right?

A: We do it well before the birds are nesting. When we put Eagle Cam Two up, we never even saw the birds. And when we put up the peregrine cam they are generally in the area, but we're not particularly worried about it. It's a little bit of a gamble on where we think they are going to nest. Fortunately, eagles, ospreys and peregrine falcons tend to nest in a place where nesting was successful in the past. Loons are a little trickier. You want the bird to nest; you don't want to disturb them. We have to do the best we can.

Q: What's on the horizon with the BioDiversity Research Institute?

A: We're waiting on the results of a study on contamination in Casco Bay. Two years ago we began a project on flame retardants and chemicals to make Teflon and pesticides and mercury. Everywhere we looked, we found chemicals we were testing for. We just did the study this year. We focused on Casco Bay, osprey eggs that were evenly distributed through the bay. Those should give us insight into how contaminants are moving around Casco Bay.

Q: Interesting stuff. What else?

A: We're also doing a lot of work with pulling together existing data and new data about the best placement of near- and offshore wind farms. We got funding to start doing some tracking of some sea ducks around the coast of Maine. When we put transmitters on the birds, anyone will be able to see the birds today. They'll be live.